

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 IO-14 DPW-01 DRC-01 /106 W

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R 230444Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8660

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PGOV, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: PGNU--TWO WEEKS AFTER THE FORMATION

REF: VIENTIANE 2768

BEGIN SUMMARY:THE NEW LAO COALITION GOVERNMENT AND JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL, FORMED MORE THAN TWO WEEKS AGO, HAVE GOTTEN A SLOW START. THE CABINET HAS MET ONLY ONCE, THE COUNCIL NOT AT ALL. LPF MINISTERS ARE TRYING TO GET ON TOP OF THEIR NEW JOBS AND HAVE NOT YET UNDERTAKEN ANY NOTABLE INITIATIVES. PACE IS LIKELY TO PICK UP THIS WEEK, AS (A) JNPC CONVENES, APRIL 25, IN LUANG PRABANG; (B) CABINET SETTLES IN FOR LONG "PRO-VISIONAL" HAUL; AND (C) JCCIA RESUMES SESSIONS AFTER FOUR WEEK'S RECESS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NEW LAO COALITION GOVERNMENT (PGNU) AND JOINT NATIONAL POLITICAL COUNCIL (JNPC), FORMED MORE THAN CONFIDENTIAL

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TWO WEEKS AGO, HAVE BEEN SLOW IN STARTING. INAUGURAL

CEREMONIES TOOK UP MOST OF THE FIRST WEEK, WHILE SECOND WEEK WAS LARGELY DEVOTED TO LAO PI MAI (NEW YEAR) FESTIVITIES IN LUANG PRABANG, WITH PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUma, FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUmi VONGVICHIT AND OTHER MINISTERS RETURNING TO VIENTIANE ONLY ON APRIL 18. BETWEEN THE CEREMONIES AND FESTIVITIES, MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES OF STATE DID FORMALLY ASSUME THEIR POSTS AND THE CABINET HELD A SINGLE MEETING, APRIL 10. HOWEVER, LAST WEEK'S CABINET MEETING WAS NOT HELD; JOINT CENTRAL COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT (JCCIA) HAS BEEN IN RECESS SINCE MARCH 27; JNPC HAS NOT YET MET; AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S STANDING COMMITTEE HAS BEEN INACTIVE.

2. MEANWHILE, NEW LPF CABINET MINISTERS HAVE APPARENTLY JUST BEEN TRYING TO GET HOLD OF THEIR NEW JOBS AND HAVE NOT UNDERTAKEN ANY NOTABLE POLICY OR PERSONNEL INITIATIVES. WHILE THEY HAVE BROUGHT WITH THEM NEW CHEFS DE CABINET AND PRIVATE SECRETARIES, LPF MINISTERS HAVE UNIFORMLY REASSURED STAFFS THAT THEY DO NOT INTEND TO MAKE EXTENSIVE PERSONNEL CHANGES IN NEAR FUTURE. THEY HAVE MADE AN INITIAL SHOW OF COOPERATING WITH THEIR DEPUTIES FROM VIENTIANE SIDE AND, IN SOME CASES (E.G., SOTH PHETRASY AT PLAN), HAVE OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED A LACK OF FAMILIARITY WITH MINISTRY FUNCTIONS. SLOW START HAS CREATED SOME UNCERTAINTY. ONE OFFICIAL FROM MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS COMPLAINED THAT NEW MINISTER SINGKAPO CHOUNRAMANY HAS SO FAR SELDOM APPEARED AT OFFICE AND THAT WORK IS BEGINNING TO BACK UP. HE SAID SIMILAR SITUATION EXISTS IN SEVERAL OTHER MINISTRIES. SECRETARY GENERAL OF MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TOLD US THAT NEW INFORMATION MINISTER SOUK VONGSAK HAS NOT YET LAID OUT ANY POLICY GUIDELINES AND THAT, IN ABSENCE OF WORD TO CONTRARY, MINISTRY WOULD NOT ALTER OUTPUT OF NATIONAL RADIO OR OFFICIAL LAO PRESSE. HE ADDED THAT SOUK HAS SAID THAT AN LPF EXPERT IN INFORMATION WILL BE COMING TO VIENTIANE SOMETIME IN FUTURE TO PROVIDE "GUIDANCE." HOWEVER, SECSTATE FOR INFORMATION, OUDAY SOUVANNAVONG, HAS INFORMED MINISTRY PERSONNEL THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROVISIONS OF PROTOCOL, STAFF IS TO ACT ONLY ON DIRECTIVES WTICH HE CONFIDENTIAL

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AND SOUK SIGN JOINTLY. NEW TEAM APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN HOLD MOST QUICKLY AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHERE STAFF MORALE HAS PERKED UP CONSIDERABLY. WE HAVE AS YET DETECTED NO CHANGE IN WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY MINISTRY.

3. ONE CHANGE IN DIPLOMATIC ENVIRONMENT WAS, HOWEVER, EVIDENT EVENING APRIL 18 AT UK EMBASSY

CELEBRATION OF QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY, FIRST NATIONAL DAY OBSERVANCE IN VIENTIANE SINCE INVESTITURE OF NEW PGNU. LPF MEMBERS OF NEW GOVERNMENT ATTENDED EVENT. UNIFORMED LPF SECURITY PERSONNEL (WITH JOINT POLICE ARM BANDS) WERE POSTED ALONG STREET, AND ALSO ALONG DRIVEWAY LEADING ONTO RESIDENCE GROUNDS, CLOSE BY RECEIVING LINE. PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, WHO DELIVERED TRADITIONAL TOAST IN FRENCH FOR RLG, HAD TO REFER FREQUENTLY TO NOTE CARD WITH TEXT OF FIVE-LINE TOAST, BUT OTHERWISE LPF MINISTERS SEEMED QUITE AT HOME IN VIENTIANE SOCIAL MILIEU.

4. IT HAS ONLY BEEN ON SUCH CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS THAT LPF SECURITY TROOPS HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY OBTRUSIVE. (PREVIOUS INSTANCES INCLUDED PROTECTION THEY PROVIDED AT RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES APRIL 6 AND FOR PRIME MINISTER'S RECEPTION APRIL 7, WHEN THEY LINED STREETS AT FAIRLY CLOSE INTERVALS WITHOUT COORDINATING WITH, OR BEING JOINED BY VIENTIANE SIDE COLLEAGUES. LATTER OCCASION PROVOKED REMONSTRANCE FROM CHIEF OF VIENTIANE SIDE POLICE THAT LPF HAD TAKEN EXCESSIVE PRE-CAUTIONS AND THAT PROTECTIVE ARRANGEMENTS HAD NOT BEEN JOINTLY AGREED.) OTHERWISE, POLICE PATROLS HAVE NOT BEEN SPECIALLY UNUSUAL. LPF JOINED IN PI MAI WATER THROWING, WETTING UP AMBUSHCADE WITH BUCKETS AND HOSE AT VIENTIANE'S JOINT HEADQUARTERS OF PROTECTIVE MILITARY FORCE NEAR MONUMENT.

5. TWO-WEEK PERIOD ALSO WITNESSED ENCOURAGING DENOUEMENT OF WORRISOME CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS NEAR SE BANG FAI BRIDGE NORTHEAST OF SAVANNAKHET. LPF TOOK TWO VIENTIANE SIDE POSITIONS IN THAT AREA, APRIL 7-8, PROMPTING SOME JOURNALISTS TO SOUND ALARMS THAT

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ACTION IMPERILLED SETTLEMENT. FAR TROOPS RECOVERED POSITIONS BY APRIL 14, AGAINST LITTLE ENEMY OPPOSITION. FAR SPOKESMAN DID NOT PUBLICIZE LATTER EVENT AND IT DID NOT GET MUCH COVERAGE IN PRESS.

6. EVEN IN LAOS, EUPHORIA OF PAST COUPLE WEEKS CANNOT

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LAST INDEFINITELY. IN FACT, IT IS LIKELY TO BE  
DISPELLED VERY QUICKLY, BEGINNING APRIL 25 WHEN THE  
JNPC CONVENES FOR ITS FIRST 30-DAY SESSION IN LUANG  
PRABANG. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, APRIL 22, SENT  
"VERY URGENT" DIPLOMATIC CIRCULAR NOTE INVITING CHIEFS  
OF MISSION TO ATTEND OPENING SESSION AT WHICH KING  
WILL BE PRESENT. WITH ACTIVATION OF JNPC, A NUMBER  
OF CRUCIAL ISSUES WILL ARISE, INCLUDING COUNCIL'S  
RELATIONSHIP WITH PGNU AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. LPF,  
QUOTING PROTOCOL, HAVE EMPHASIZED THE JNPC'S "EQUAL  
AND INDEPENDENT" RELATIONSHIP WITH PGNU. IN HIS STATE-  
MENT AT FIRST CABINET MEETING, APRIL 10, PHOUMI  
ASSERTED THAT PGNU WILL BE GUIDED BY POLITICAL PROGRAM  
ADOPTED BY JNPC. HARD MANEUVERING CAN BE EXPECTED  
AS THE UNEASY AND COMPETITIVE PGNU/JNPC  
RELATIONSHIP EVOLVES; AND, OF COURSE, IT IS NOT  
CERTAIN THAT THE DIFFERENCES IN SUCH A STRUGGLE WILL  
HEW STRICTLY TO LINES BETWEEN LPF AND VIENTIANE SIDE.

7. ON OTHER HAND, LPF WILL NO DOUBT BE UNITED IN VIEW  
THAT JNPC SUPPLANTS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND, IF ASSEMBLY  
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CONVENES, AS CONSTITUTIONALLY SCHEDULED, AT CEREMONIES  
PRESIDED BY KING, MAY 11, IT WILL DRAW FIRE FROM ALL  
LPF ELEMENTS. KING PRESUMABLY WILL DESIRE TO UPHOLD

SPECIFIC CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS REGARDING ASSEMBLY.  
LAO WILL THUS BE FORCED WITHIN NEXT THREE WEEKS TO COPE  
AGAIN WITH HISTORICAL TENSION BETWEEN LPF AND  
ASSEMBLY.

8. AFTER NEARLY FOUR WEEKS' RECESS, JCCIA IS SCHEDULED  
TO RESUME SESSIONS THIS WEEK. FIRST STEP WILL PROBABLY  
BE TO GET REORGANIZED. JCCIA HAD PROPOSED TO DELEGATE  
WORK TO THREE MAIN SUB-COMMITTEES:

- 1) MILITARY (TO SUPERVISE CEASEFIRE, EMPLANT  
STAKES, AND MONITOR WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN  
FORCES);
- 2) REFUGEES AND POWS; AND
- 3) NEUTRALIZATION OF VIENTIANE AND LUANG PRABANG.

FIRST TWO GROUPS HAVE NEVER REALLY ORGANIZED.  
VIENTIANE SIDE HAD APPOINTED ITS CHAIRMEN (GENERALS  
BOUNTHIENG VENEVONGSOS AND ETAM SINGVONGSA, FOR MILITARY  
AND REFUGEES/POWS RESPECTIVELY); BUT LPF HAVE NOT YET  
MADE SUCH APPOINTMENTS. (GENERAL BOUNTHIENG, INCIDENTALLY,  
TOLD EMBOFF LAST WEEK THAT HE HAD RESIGNED HIS JCCIA JOB  
BECAUSE IT DID NOT CONFER RESPONSIBILITIES COMMENSURATE  
WITH HIS RANK.) IN ADDITION TO NAMING SUB-COMMITTEE  
CHAIRMEN, TWO SIDES WILL HAVE TO REVIEW DELEGATIONS TO  
FULL COMMISSION, SINCE SEVERAL MEMBERS-INCLUDING BOTH  
DELEGATION CHAIRMEN, SOTH PHETRASY AND SOUKAN VILAY-  
SARN--HAVE BEEN APPOINTED TO NEW PGNU. AFTER ORGANIZING,  
COMMISSION AND SUB-COMMITTEES WILL NO DOUBT HAVE TO  
ADOPT WORKING PLANS AND PRIORITIES. IN SHORT, JCCIA  
HAS TAKEN "TIME OUT" AND WE CAN ANTICIPATE TARDY START  
IN RETURN OF CAPTURED PERSONNEL, WHICH, UNDER TERMS OF  
PROTOCOL, WAS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IN THREE STAGES OVER  
60-DAY PERIOD, FOLLOWING FORMATION OF GOVERNMENT. SEVEN-  
TEEN OF 20 DAYS IN FIRST STAGE HAVE ALREADY ELAPSED AND  
THERE IS NO SIGN OF ANY PREPARATIONS FOR RETURNING  
PRISONERS. WE HAVE EXPRESSED TO LEADERS ON BOTH LPF  
AND VIENTIANE SIDE OUR CONCERN THAT TWO SIDES PROMPTLY  
CARRY OUT PROTOCOL PROVISIONS ON RETURNING PRISONERS  
(ESPECIALLY THE SINGLE ACKNOWLEDGED AMERICAN POW,

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EMMET KAY) AS WELL AS ON PROVIDING OVERDUE INFORMATION  
ON DICS AND PROSPECTIVE DATA ON MIAS. THE JCCIA MEETING  
THIS WEEK MAY OFFER A CLUE AS TO HOW EFFECTIVE OUR  
REPRESENTATIONS HAVE BEEN.

9. FINALLY, CABINET ITSELF MUST THIS WEEK FINALLY START  
TO SETTLE IN FOR THE LONG "PROVISIONAL" HAUL OF THE NEW  
GOVERNMENT. AS MINISTERS AND DEPUTIES TACKLE THE  
SUBSTANCE OF THEIR WORK, THE NATURE AND TYPE OF LPF  
INFLUENCE WILL BECOME EVIDENT. CABINET DECISIONS ARE

REQUIRED SOON ON FEOF ARRANGEMENTS FOR 1974 (WHICH ARE TO SIGNED APRIL 30) AND DESIGNEES FOR AMBASSADOR-SHIPS IN WASHINGTON, NEW DELHI, SAIGON AND HANOI (WHICH FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS BEEN ASKED TO PROPOSE). THE LPF HAVE NOT SIGNALLED ANY MAJOR CONTENTION ON THESE OR OTHER ISSUES LIKELY TO COME BEFORE THE CABINET IN NEAR FUTURE. IT APPEARS, INSTEAD, THAT LIKELY FOCUS FOR POLITICAL MANEUVERING OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WILL BE THE EVOLVING INTER-RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CABINET, POLITICAL COUNCIL AND ASSEMBLY.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** COALITION GOVERNMENT, GOVERNMENT REFORM, CABINET, POLITICAL SITUATION, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 23 APR 1974  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** BoyleJA  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1974VIENTI03210  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D740095-0065  
**From:** VIENTIANE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1974/newtext/t19740420/aaaaareo.tel  
**Line Count:** 288  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 6  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** VIENTIANE 2768  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** BoyleJA  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 26 JUL 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <26 JUL 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <26 MAR 2003 by BoyleJA>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PGNU--TWO WEEKS AFTER THE FORMATION  
**TAGS:** MOPS, PGOV, PFOR, LA, PGNU  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005